68

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SOME

REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES

IN

The Life and Death of

JOHN STEPTOE,

Who was Executed at

No-Man's-Land, near Reading,

On the 25th of March, 1786,

For SHEEP-STEALING.

Thanks be to God, which giveth us the Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Cor. xv, 57.

READING:

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SOME

REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES, &c.

JOHN STEPTOE was born at Childrey, a ſmall village in the county of Berks, in the year 1764, of honeſt, induſtrious parents, who gave him a decent education and brought him up in huſbandry work. He had never lived from the place of his nativity but one year, and that but two miles from the ſaid place; his general character was that of a moſt remarkable honeſt, ſober, induſtrious youth. Here early in life he was impreſſed with a ſerious, religious frame of mind; for when

when his acquaintance would call for him on ſabbath days to ſpend them in idle and wicked amuſements, he had regard to what Solomon has to ſay on this matter; "My ſon, if thou wilt receive my words, they ſhall be as an ornament of grace unto thy head and chains of gold about thy neck: refrain thy feet from their path, and walk not thou in the way with them, for it leads to the chambers of the grave. A wiſe man will hear and attend to counſel." Here the promiſing youth who was led in the way of righteouſneſs, would retire to his chamber with the word of the bleſſed God before him, (the Bible) knowing that was able to make him wiſe unto ſalvation, as he has told me with the Pſalmiſt, "bleſſed are they that hear the joyful ſound," and again ſaid he, after our Saviour, "ſearch the ſcriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which teſtify of me:" he ſearched for it as for hid treaſures, and when he had found it he rejoiced with great joy; and, like the maſter in the parable of the loſt ſheep, he called his friends

friends to rejoice with him. " By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples if ye have love one to another. John xiii, 35."

STEPTOE was as a light ſet on a hill that cannot be hid; for he, with 2 Peter, chap. ii, knew, *they* were forſaking the right way by ſabbath-breaking, ſwearing, lying, drunkenneſs and ſuch like, he having a love for precious ſouls, reproved, rebuked, and admoniſhed them, by telling them of their danger. O what a leſſon is here, for us to be faithful to ſouls in our day when iniquity abounds, and with Steptoe, eſteem the reproach of Chriſt better than all the riches and flattery in the world. Our friend found there was a meeting of Chriſtian friends, ſome little diſtance from where he lived, where he did not forget to aſſemble himſelf at all opportunities. May this encourage us to be preſſing forward for the mark of the prize of our high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus; for here, he told me, he found his Chriſt precious indeed, relying on the faithfulneſs of God, who has promiſed that they

they that ſeek ſhall find, he referred me to the Songs of Solomon, chap. v, the beginning of that chapter, and ſpoke to me comfortably indeed at the remembrance of them; this he found at his public attendance at the Houſe of God; he obſerved the Apoſtle's injunction, not forgetting the aſſembling together, leſt he ſhould, like the Apoſtle Thomas, loſe that peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding. Thomas, you may remember, was abſent when the Apoſtles were met together, Chriſt came and ſpoke "peace be to you." The diſciples when they ſaw Thomas ſaid, we have ſeen Jeſus, but Thomas ſays, I will not believe till I ſee the print of the nails and thruſt my hand into his ſide. Thomas got an unbelieving heart by this neglect. May we learn by this to fill up our places in the houſe of our God, leſt we grow hardened through unbelief and the deceitfulneſs of ſin. In 3d chap. of Solomon's Songs and the four firſt verſes, we read that he ſought him whom his ſoul loved, and found him not; ſtill he continued ſeeking,

knowing

knowing him to be faithful who had prmiſed. He found him, and would not let him go until he had brought him into his mother's houſe and into the chambers of her that conceived him. He told me how exceeding precious he found Chriſt to his ſoul; he thought the ways of religion the ways of pleaſantneſs and all her paths peace. But we muſt be led to ſee the evil of our corrupt hearts and humble ourſelves before we are exalted. This was his experience which he heard preached from Solomon's Songs, chap. v, verſe 7. There the watchman found him, ſmote him and wounded him. The word was quick and powerful, ſharper than a two-edged ſword; he was cut down as a cumberer of the ground. Acts v, 33. When he heard, he was cut to the heart and being under condemnation by the law, he was ſeeking juſtification by faith. Here he preached a ſermon to me in the goal at the remembrance of theſe words, he went on he ſaid rejoicing in the Lord. But Oh, let us be careful and take to us Chriſt's words, watch and pray that ye

enter

enter not into temptation; the ſpirit indeed is willing but the fleſh is very weak, what I ſay therefore I ſay unto all, watch. This we have all great reaſon to do, ſeeing this promiſing youth's deſtruction was wrought when he was off his guard and weak through the fleſh. May we walk circumſpectly, knowing the adverſary the devil walketh about ſeeking whom he may devour.

The hiſtory of Steptoe's fall was this: Sometime in March, 1785, he, with an acquaintance of his, went a little diſtance from his maſter's houſe in buſineſs. In their return home, the weather being then hot and they thirſty, they called at a public houſe at Letcomb, where they ſat down to drink: A poor man came in, whoſe name is Powell, whom they knew, they having ſeen him travelling about that country; and they having beer enough, Steptoe ſaid, we have had beer ſufficient, give the man ſome; he drank, and, like Judas, went out and communed how to take away his life. Steptoe and his friend parted,

parted, and Steptoe came for home, his maſter's houſe. Now the devil, like a lion, attacks him, the god and prince of this world aſſaults him, and he being without the *armour* on, could not withſtand him; like our firſt parents he fell, but for our encouragement, though he fell, yet ſhall he riſe again all victorious, completely cloathed, having on the white robes waſhed in the blood of the Lamb; but Satan with all his infernal crew, laid cloſe ſiege to his precious ſoul, now the trap was laid for the innocent, for as Steptoe was going by a fold of ſheep that belonged to his maſter, Powell, whom he had juſt before given drink to, intreated that he might take a ſheep, Steptoe being in liquor did not deny him poſitively, but rather gave him leave to take. Steptoe was now in the way of temptation, and ſenſeleſs. The grand enemy of our ſalvation loſeth no opportunity for the deſtruction of ſouls. O ſinners! You that taſte the ſeeming ſweets of ſin, now drinking in iniquity, as the ox drinketh water, hear what a woe

is denounced againſt the ſin of drunkenneſs; let thoſe that follow ſtrong drink till wine inflame them, remember that for theſe things God will bring them into judgment. This was the caſe here, for when he recovered from his cups, he reflected upon what had happened, he bowed his head like a bull ruſh, he mourned ſore like a dove, and as one that mourned for his firſt-born; therefore, ſaid he, I repented in duſt and aſhes, I put on ſackcloth and wept in the duſt of the earth, he had no reſt from the crown of his head to the ſole of his foot. This change was obſerved by the family where he lived, but he was aſhamed to confeſs to them the cauſe till it was too late. It may be neceſſary to obſerve that he was not uſed to liquor, for he was never diſguiſed by it but twice. Here the flouriſhing plant that was juſt burſting into bloſſom, and flouriſhing like a tree planted by the water ſide, was by ſin cut down and lay withering like graſs before the ſun. Now the devil greedy of his prey, leſt he ſhould

loſe

loſe him, makes uſe of the ſame inſtrument as before: this Powell came to Steptoe when looking after his flock in the field, and boldly aſked for more ſheep, but Steptoe refuſed; then, ſaid he, I'll hang you. Now was the net ſpread for his precious ſoul. He was compaſſed in his ſteps, their eyes were ſet bowing down to the ground like a lion that is greedy of prey; and again in the Pſalms. He ſitteth in the lurking places of the villages, in the ſecret places of the villages doth he murder the innocent; his eyes are privily ſet againſt the poor, he lieth in wait ſecretly as a lion in his den, that he may draw him into his net. The weakneſs of human nature is here diſcovered, for, like Peter, he denieth his maſter for fear of the reproach of men. But Oh! he that ſeeks to ſave his life ſhall loſe it, ſays Chriſt, and this was exemplified in our friend, for he ſuffered the wolf to devour his flock; but the Lord looked upon him as he did upon Peter, and he wept bitterly.

But

But to proceed with this hiſtory, the inſtrument that Satan made uſe of at firſt to betray him, ſtill continued in the buſineſs, as a good workman of a bad maſter, the devil; he ſends a letter to Steptoe's Maſter and diſcloſes the robbery, which he himſelf was the inſtigation of, and many more, (for he is now bound in priſon until he is tranſported) in conſequence of his information, Steptoe was taken up and conveyed before a juſtice of the peace, and by him ſent to Reading gaol; his maſter, the proſecutor, would have been bound for his appearance at the aſſizes, and continued him in his ſervice, but that could not be granted; but before he went to priſon, he went about the country and found all his maſter's property, and ſwore to them, as being the ſhepherd, and reſtored them to his maſter. Let none attempt to aſk why the ſhepherd had not diſcovered the robbery, as being ſeduced by another, but as it was before obſerved for fear of men, and the conſequences that might enſue at that time; ſuffice it to ſay, it was ordered

ordered by the wiſe providence of God, I truſt for wiſe ends. It has been the means of converting ſouls to God while he was in priſon and under the gallows. I was led to go to ſee him juſt before the aſſize, when I ſpoke to him, and was well pleaſed with his company, for here he preached a ſermon to me, he ſpoke of the corruption of human nature, that we were born in ſin, conceived in iniquity, and that we go aſtray and ſpeak lies, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked. He inſiſted upon the neceſſity of a change wrought by the operation of the ſpirit of God. He bleſſed God that he was made ſenſible of his loſt eſtate by nature, and that he had beams of hope through Jeſus Chriſt, in theſe diſtreſſing circumſtances he ſaid he ſhould have fainted but that he believed verily to ſee the goodneſs of the Lord in the land of the living; here the Lord of Light and Glory ſaid as it were to him, I have ſomewhat againſt thee, becauſe thou hadſt left thy firſt love; but he was then enabled to cry out

with

with the prophet Iſaiah: But now, O Lord, thou art our Father, we are thy clay, thou art our potter. I am the work of thy hands, be not wrath very ſore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever. Behold, I beſeech thee, behold, I beſeech thee, we are thy people; and thy gracious anſwer we have in the ſame prophecy; ſurely thou art my people, ſo he was his ſaviour. For though you fall you ſhall riſe again, for I have loved thee, and gave myſelf for thee, therefore thou art mine. Call upon the Lord all ye his people, and he ſhall ſay, here am I, ariſe, ſhine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is riſen upon thee. O what manner of love is this the Father hath beſtowed upon us that we ſhould be called the children of God. The ſpirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Chriſt, if ſo be we ſuffer with him that we may be glorified together. Here let me remark how exceeding precious theſe texts of

ſcripture

ſcripture were to him: he was remarkably fond of the Epiſtle to the Romans, and that to the Hebrews, that he could repeat them without book, he had been ſo converſant with them. May we be enabled to pray for preventing grace, and may he that thinketh he ſtandeth take heed leſt he fall. Steptoe the ſhepherd fell. I truſt for the trials of his faith and patience, that theſe trials ſhould work for him an eternal weight of glory, and that ſinners ſhould be brought to a ſight and ſenſe of their ſins, and be plunged in the fountain open for ſenſible ſinners; ſenſible of their guilt, ſenſible of their ſtate by nature, ſeeing themſelves deſtitute, poor, blind and naked; deſtitute in themſelves, and that without Chriſt they muſt inevitably periſh; and being led by the ſpirit to lay hold on Chriſt crucified, who came to ſeek and to ſave them that were loſt. Sin! What deſtruction haſt thou wrought on earth? Sin was the cauſe of Steptoe's grief and ſhameful death, and this he lamented "I have done this evil and ſinned againſt God.

God. No affliction for the preſent ſeemeth joyous but grievous; but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs to them that are exerciſed thereby." O the forbearance and long ſuffering of God towards us, that we are ſtill upon praying ground. May a ſpirit of prayer and thankſgiving reſt upon us for his unſpeakable mercies.

While Steptoe was in priſon he heard of the death of that ſaint of God, Mrs. Talbot, and that her funeral ſermon was to be bought: he was hungering and thirſting for a portion of God's vineyard, and found the fruit ſweet to his taſte. This was the firſt time he was known to be a follower of Chriſt; when like Joſeph he found favour with the keeper of the priſon. A ſhort time before I went to ſee him, he told me he was ſeeking the Lord, and he found this text encouraging "Seek ye my face, thy face Lord I will ſeek evermore, for I know there is no other God, and beſides thee there is no Saviour." He found with the apoſtle Paul, that when he would do good, evil

evil was preſent with him, that he broke out, O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this body of death; and he ſaid he found ſuch a proneneſs to evil that at times he was led to think he ſhould be loſt, but I referred him to ſome paſſages in Iſaiah, as in the 40th chap. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might; he encreaſeth ſtrength; and they that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength, they ſhall mount up with wings of eagles, they ſhall run and not be weary, they ſhall walk and not faint. Again 41ſt chap. They that war againſt thee ſhall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught, for I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, ſaying unto thee "Fear not, I will help thee." And again, fear not thou worm of Jacob, though a priſoner, and faſt bound in irons, and looked on by man as a thief and a robber, and the outcaſts of the people. The Lord ſeeth not as man ſeeth, neither are his ways our ways, for the Lord hath created thee, and he hath formed thee. O Jacob, fear not

men nor devils, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by my name; thou art mine. When thou paſſeth through the fire I will be with thee; and the waters ſhall not overflow thee, for I am the Lord.

Our friend took his trial at Abingdon, March 6, 1786, and was found guilty, and received ſentence of death with ſix more for different offences, three of them were immediately reprieved, but he was not of the number, which was expected; but God's bleſſed will be done in all things. His maſter, the proſecutor gave him the beſt of characters: the grand jury ſpoke in his favour, but to no purpoſe. In the way to his dreary priſon, he could lift up his voice as a trumpet to his fellow priſoners, and tell with pleaſure all his Saviour's wonderous works in a way of providence and grace: and he counted not his life dear unto him for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord: he knew in whom he had believed, even in him who had promiſed to be with him in the valley of the ſhadow of death:

he was fond of ſinging the praiſes of God, delighted in the company of God's people; and we have to bleſs and praiſe thee O God, who didſt incline their hearts to viſit them: thou gaveſt the word and great was the company. May much good be done among us, and the glory redound to thy name. The firſt time I went to ſee Steptoe after his condemnation, I found him meditating on death, when he ſaid, ah! lovely appearance of death, he longed to be diſſolved and to be with Chriſt: how bleſt he ſhould be when bereft of all that could burden his mind: no longer in miſery, no longer a ſinner: the war in the members being then over, and being where the wicked ceaſe from troubling and the ſoul is at reſt. To mourn and ſuffer was his, while in priſon, but waiting for deliverance: Come Lord Jeſus, come quickly.

A petition was procured and ſent to the King, but his offence being ſheep-ſtealing and from his maſter, it was without ſucceſs; and I believe he was not in the leaſt deſirous to be

in the body, but to depart and to be with Chriſt, which is far better. His conduct while under condemnation was meekneſs, calmneſs, reſignation, a firm and unſhaken faith in Chriſt. The laſt week before his execution was remarkable indeed, for I believe and truſt the Lord God Almighty put forth his power and plucked his fellow-ſufferers as brands from hell, for a few days before they were as blind and ignorant as to ſalvation by Chriſt, as the ſeat they ſat on. O thou God who heareſt and anſwereſt prayer, to thee ſhall all fleſh come. The throne was beſieged as it were from all quarters, and like Jacob with the angel, would not let him go till he had beſtowed a bleſſing, and in God's due time it was anſwered; for behold the Lord's hand is not ſhortened, that it cannot ſave, nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; and though he has called and we refuſed, he may ſay, I have hid my face, becauſe your iniquities have ſeparated between you and me: for his iniquity was I wrath, and I ſmote him and hid me,

and

and was wrath: and he went on ſtill in the ways of his heart. But I have ſeen his ways ſays the compaſſionate God, and I will heal him alſo, and reſtore comfort unto him. Here you may ſee the effectual fervent prayer how it prevails with God through Jeſus Chriſt. Here God and man have ſweet communion with each other. On Tueſday in this week I found Steptoe in the Chapel, in the reading deſk, where he had been pouring out his whole ſoul in extempore prayer with two friends. I went into the deſk to him, he turned to ſeveral texts of ſcripture, precious indeed, with that ſerioufneſs, ſimplicity, and godly ſincerity, that I am at a loſs to ſet it forth. On Wedneſday I found ſeveral friends with him. One friend aſked him how he could reconcile a paſſage in Deuteronomy, where it is ſaid, he that is hanged is accurſed of God. He replied with a confidence becoming a believer in Chriſt, that Chriſt became a curſe for us, and redeemed us from the

the curſe of that law. He was aſked again what he thought of that paſſage in Romans viii. 1. He replied there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Jeſus Chriſt. This I have heard him triumph in more than once; here his hope was well grounded and ſure, for we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now; and not only they but ourſelves alſo which are the firſt fruits of the ſpirit, even we ourſelves groan within ourſelves waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies. For we are ſaved by hope, but hope that is ſeen is not hope, for what a man ſeeth, why doth he yet hope for. Again; If God be for us who can be againſt us; who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect. It is God that juſtifieth who is he that condemneth: It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again. Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? not death itſelf: for I ſhall ſtand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my ſkin worms deſtroy this body,

yet

yet in my fleſh ſhall I ſee God, whom I ſhall ſee for myſelf and not another. At another time I found the Shepherd with his fellow ſufferers expounding the Scriptures; two or three friends being preſent, we went to prayers, beſeeching God in mercy to look upon our fellow ſinners and viſit them with his ſalvation; and we have reaſon to bleſs God that heard and anſwered; for Hemmings, one that was to ſuffer for horſe-ſtealing, was as it were ſeized by the throat with pay me what thou oweſt: he was pricked to the heart, convinced of his loſt eſtate, found he had nothing to bring but moſt unclean and filthy rags, and like Paul, when he was going to Damaſcus, he fell to the ground as one dead: this cauſed me to rejoice and give God the glory, that I truſted ſalvation was brought to that houſe. When he came to himſelf again, by the means made uſe of, his language was very different to what it had been before, which was "I have made my peace with God and am quite eaſy." Lulled in carnal ſecurity with his conſcience

feared

ſeared with a red hot iron as it were; but now he breaks out in the anguiſh of his ſoul; O Lord Jeſus Chriſt have mercy on me, what a ſinner am I, ſays he. O Saviour! that came to ſave ſuch, I hope I ſhall find forgiveneſs; but theſe things were ſtrange to me before, for I never heard of them: he brake out again, Lord Jeſus have mercy on me a vile ſinner; he then bleſſed God that he was ever brought to Reading Goal. O that this may teach us to adore the mercy of God, for the fountain open ~~for us~~ to purify the ſinners. Thou art the Lord, fearful and gracious, long ſuffering and abundant in goodneſs and truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin.

The Shepherd was glad, he told me, to ſee his fellow ſufferers thus humbled, that he might be exalted in God's due time; for ſaid he, when I was in prayer laſt night, he turned him round and laughed; but now his laughter was turned into mourning: and bleſſed are they that mourn for they ſhall be com-

comforted. We then ſung their favourite hymn, " Jeſu! lover of my ſoul." Thurſday in the morning I went and found ſome Chriſtian friends; we ſpent ſome time in prayer, ſinging, and ſuitable diſcourſe. A friend addreſſed the Shepherd too upon what grounds his hope was placed, and deſcribed ſeveral ſorts of hope. To which Steptoe replied, thoſe are the hopes of the hypocrite that ſhall periſh; and if I had no better, I ſhould be of all men moſt miſerable; but his hope was ſure, grounded upon Chriſt the chief corner ſtone; a tried ſtone elect and precious: his hope was like the wiſe man's houſe, founded on a rock, that the ſtorms of ſin and ſatan could not move. Friday, the day before the execution, we had a Bethel indeed, for many friends were there and ſpoke comfortably unto them, and in ſuch company they were not tired; where they found a word in ſeaſon to their ſouls, and bleſſed them; watered by the dew of heavenly grace, refreſhing the weary, ſupporting the weak, and cleanſing the guilty: which enabled

them to lift up the hand that hung down, and rejoice that their redemption drew nigh. The Shepherd would always remember his friends before the throne of grace; for I have heard him in prayer beg God to return ſeven-fold into his friends boſom that came to viſit them in love to their ſouls. He was inſtant in prayer not only morning and evening, but at noon and at midnight would he pour out his ſoul to God, and ſhew him of his trouble. Friday at midnight a few friends were there, and the Shepherd told them if his conſolations did not flow from the right quarter he could wiſh to be in tears night and day: but now being delivered from the fear of death and puniſhment of ſin, he could lift up his head with joy, knowing his redemption drew nigh. Saturday morning early I went again with a friend or two (the morning of the execution). I aſked the Shepherd, how he found himſelf, he replied with true Chriſtian fortitude, I have found Chriſt, and will not let him go. We ſpent ſome time in prayer and ſinging and left them com-

comfortable in the Lord. A ſhort time after, I went again and found them as I left them. Steptoe was really the Chriſtian Soldier with Chriſt's armour on, ready armed to meet the laſt enemy, death. For a garment he had the robes of Chriſt's righteouſneſs; the helmet of ſalvation, the breaſt plate of righteouſneſs, the ſhield of faith, the ſword of the ſpirit, his feet ſhod with the preparation of the goſpel of peace, fighting the good fight of faith and overcoming through the blood of the Lamb. He likewiſe appeared to be very chearful; I aſked him if he found the pardoning love of Chriſt, he anſwered, yes. He was aſked if the thoughts of death did not terrify him, he ſaid, no; but he thought it might when he ſaw the gallows; for, ſays he nature is nature ſtill.

Hemmings, the horſe ſtealer, appeared compoſed and thankful that he had a Saviour when he was in the greateſt need; ſaid he was convinced of ſin, and ſaw the neceſſity of Chriſt to ſave him.

Cripps, the houſe-breaker, I truſt, likewiſe found

found a Saviour; he too had been living without hope, and without God in the world, but now he ſaid he was not afraid to die, having found that Chriſt came to ſave ſinners, of whom he was chief; and while Steptoe was in prayer with two friends, preſent and fellow-ſufferers, Cripps, ſeemed to experience much of the preſence of God, for his attitude was, as it appeared to me, the impulſe of the ſpirit within. Prayer being over, I aſked Cripps where his hopes of ſalvation were placed. He ſaid on Chriſt, and on him only; acknowledging what a ſinner he was, and hoped he ſhould have an intereſt in the blood of Chriſt: ſo I truſt he was ſaved like the thief upon the croſs.

Steptoe was longing to be with Chriſt; longing for the time of his diſſolution. Come, ſays he, to me, let us ſing another hymn. "Jeſu, lover of my ſoul!" was the hymn ſung; very lively indeed. A friend ſaid, Shepherd, you'll have the advantage of us, you will be in glory firſt. He, with his eyes fixed above, ſmiled with an earneſt looking for the

glory

glory that ſhould be revealed. He then deſired to ſing the fifty-firſt Pſalm: a friend preſent went to prayer. Now the time drew nigh that they muſt leave the priſon. The Shepherd went to prayer, many friends being preſent; he found great liberty; was very expreſſive. What was advanced ſeemed to be accompanied with the power of God: people in tears, being much affected. A friend addreſſed Hemmings and found him happy in the Lord; he ſaid he ſhould ſoon be in the arms of Chriſt for ever. Cripps ſaid he was comfortable, relying on the mercy of God. They then went from their cell to the chapel, and received the ſacrament, when they returned Steptoe ſaid he had been feeding by faith on Chriſt, who was the living bread; and that he ſhould not taſte henceforth the fruit of the vine, till he drank it new in his Father's kingdom. The order came, the cart is waiting for your bodies. Hemmings ſaid, he hoped Chriſt was waiting for their ſouls. Cripps ſaid it was the happieſt day he ever ſaw in his

his life. The executioner came into the cell. Steptoe went and took him by the hand with chearfulneſs, as the inſtrument to launch him into glory. Their arms were then tied behind them: he with that chriſtian courage that was immoveable, and in haſte to arrive on Canaan ſhore, could ſay with the Apoſtle, Our life is hid with Chriſt in God. Again, according to my expectation and hope, that in nothing I ſhould be aſhamed, but that with all boldneſs ſo now Chriſt ſhall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death. This was his language " When this earthly tabernacle is diſſolved, I have a building of God, a houſe, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Finding they had a few moments more in priſon with their friends. Steptoe ſaid, let us ſing the Lamentation of a Sinner, they ſung with great fervour till they left their cell. Their coffins being carried out, Steptoe looking up, ſaw the ſun ſhining bright, ſaid, this is the laſt ſun I ſhall ſee below; but I ſhall ſoon ſee the Son of Righteouſneſs, and be with him

for

for ever. They all three left the priſon, aſcended the cart, ſeated themſelves on their coffins, and their hats were off, they went on ſinging and triumphing in redeeming love till they came to the fatal tree. It was obſerved, when they came within ſight of the gallows, the Shepherd, inſtead of being caſt down or diſmayed, ſeemed all compoſure, and glad he was ſo near his journey's end, for he had travelled through the wilderneſs of this world very quick: he was taken from the evil to come, though the way was rough and crooked, beſet with dangers; but now he was juſt recovering from the fatigues of the way.

Under the gallows he addreſſed the numerous ſpectators:

My dear fellow ſinners! ſays he, you are come here to ſee me die a ſhameful death; the wages of ſin both temporal and eternal. And here let me remark that half or three parts of you, my friends, that are ſurrounding me, know nothing perhaps of your ſtate by nature: the nature of evil there is in your corrupt

rupt hearts, and that it muſt be renewed by the grace of God, that the ſpirit certify with our ſpirit that we are the children of God.

I was born at Childrey, and there I lived, and bore an unblemiſhed character, and none could accuſe me of any thing, but of this crime for which I am to loſe my life.— I ſuffered reproach for the ſake of religion, and now I have brought a repoach on the Goſpel, for which I am ſorry, but this is my conſolation; that as the Apoſtle fell, no wonder ſuch a fellow as I ſhould fall (this was his debaſing language). Now, my fellow ſinners, I would not have you think that we are ſinners above all men, becauſe we ſuffer theſe things. I tell you, nay; except you forſake ſin and repent, you ſhall all likewiſe periſh. How does it behove you to weep for your ſin, not for us only, ſeeing you are under the ſame condemnation in the ſight of God. I beſeech you to go home and ſet your houſe in order, for thou ſhalt die, and not live. O what a thing then is ſin! how hateful in the ſight of God.

There-

Therefore as it hath pleaſed God to make us an example, it is in order to deter you from the like offences. I, knowing the terrors of the Lord, perſuade you to reflect on theſe things, ſeeing God is holy, and that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord. O beg that God would ſanctify your corrupt nature, and make your bodies the temples of the Holy Ghoſt. O what deſtruction ſin has wrought upon the earth! Sin, when it has conceived, bringeth forth death: the wages of ſin is ſpiritual and eternal deſtruction of ſoul and body in hell, for ever. My fellow ſinners, I beſeech you to flee from the appearance of evil, that will bring you to a ſhameful death here, if not to eternal deſtruction hereafter. Therefore, young people, remember your Creator in the days of your youth, and then you may ſay with the apoſtle Paul, I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs. Let me prevail on you to flee from ſin as from the face of a ſerpent, leſt like me,

you come to ſuffer here as an evil doer, and ſuffer the wrath of God to all eternity; for be aſſured that if you eſcape the judgment of men, which has juſtly overtaken us, yet there will be a general one, from which none can eſcape. O that this would awaken your conſciences before you come before the judge of quick and dead. We have received from men the juſtice of our crimes here, but, my friends, there is another coming, for behold the judge ſtandeth at the door, and happy will ye be who ſhall ſtand before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, without ſpot or blemiſh, or any ſuch thing, having the judge for your Saviour. O turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die; avoid bad company, for it too frequently happens, that evil communications corrupt good manners. Let every one amongſt you that beholds our diſſolution ſpend his time in ſerving the Lord, leſt, like us, you are brought to ſuffer as a criminal, and you ſhould find no place of repentance, and becauſe ſentence is not ſpeedily executed, the heart of man is ſet in them to do evil.

And

And now you that ſurround, both young and old, let me addreſs you not to forget a future judgment, for the thoughts of this have made me to tremble, and like Belteſhazzer, not only the joints of my loins but my heart alſo. O that you underſtood this, that you would conſider your latter end, for it is a melancholy diſconſolate work when men draw near to their latter end, to look back upon a vicious life. O what a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. My fellow ſinners, I pray God that this word of exhortation may ſink deep into your hearts, and may it be ſet home by the ſpirit of my God, that it may produce the deſired effect, and remember that he that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, muſt ſuffer perſecution. It may be thought mean and low, deſpicable, and as a thing of naught by the great, the noble, and faſhionable of the earth, but it is the one thing needful, the pearl of great price; therefore come out from amongſt the gay and careleſs ſcoffers at religion, and have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful

works of darkneſs: follow the means of grace, and be in earneſt with God, that he would enlighten your dark underſtanding, that he would turn you from darkneſs to light, from the power of ſatan to God, that you may be preſerved from evil here, and delivered from puniſhment hereafter, that you may enjoy the pleaſures that are at God's right hand for evermore. It is in vain for me to ſay a word to your profit, except you are enabled to embrace it, in the love and truth of it. Once more, my friends, let me beg of you to keep from evil company, for I muſt ſuffer the loſs of my life in conſequence of being with ſuch. It was this that brought me to this unhappy end, I am going to ſuffer. May you take warning by me, and be not yoked together with unbelievers, for by this means many are led aſtray and come to naught; this was the cauſe of my untimely end, and I wiſh you to remember theſe things, leſt you come to ſuffer as an evil doer, and what is worſe, if not intereſt in the merits of a Saviour, muſt be

be baniſhed from his preſence for evermore. That you all may eſcape the judgments of God and man, is the ſincere wiſh of your friend and ſufferer.

After this exhortation, he went to prayers extempore: he was much at liberty, and very expreſſive to this effect: as we may ſuppoſe he was, by the grand inveterate enemy of ſouls, with all his infernal forces, in this laſt moment, violently beſet; but, through Chriſt that ſtrengthened him, he was more than conqueror; for he called God his Father, God his Judge; and, if God be for us who ſhall be againſt us: take us into thy protection, bear us in thy arms, embrace us in thy compaſſion and love. Thou haſt been pleaſed in love and mercy to my ſoul, to leave the manſions of glory, and give thyſelf a ranſom for my ſoul; thou haſt ſpilt thy precious blood. O wonderful Lord, who hath waſhed me in thy blood and cleanſed me from my ſin: Lord draw us with thy grace, that we may go thro' through the valley, ſupported by the rod and.

Here

Here he was enabled to look beyond the grave, to the Heavenly Canaan, the New Jeruſalem, the city of the living God. He was like St. Paul, caught up into the third heaven, and heard things that could not be ſpoken; he was drinking large draughts out of the fullneſs of Chriſt; for he broke out,

O my drooping friends below,
Did you but half his glory know;
Daily would you ſtretch the wing,
Thus to fly and thus to ſing.

You would ſtretch the wings of faith towards heaven. O the glorious manſions! I ſhall enter into that glorious company of ſaints and ſpirits made perfect. I will ſing thy praiſes through a vaſt eternity. A view of the glory he was waiting for, ſure, muſt enable him, thus to triumph, in the very jaws of death. Then he begged the Almighty to look upon him with love, to help him with his Almighty Arm, to ſend protection from heaven, that his faith might not be ſhipwrecked in the ſight of harbour;

harbour; to let ſome glorified ſpirit be ſent down to convoy him ſafe to glory. And we may ſuppoſe, that, by the voice of the ſpirit, he heard, This day ſhalt thou be with me in paradiſe. He was ſenſible of the grace beſtowed on him not being in vain. He was ſeparated from the world, his expectation was from above, where his advocate was ſitting enthroned in glory; ſaying, come, enter the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.

Precious in the ſight of the Lord, is the death of his Saints.

He, like his Maſter, committed his ſoul to God, and fell aſleep in the arms of Jeſus; for ſays he, into thy hands I commend my ſoul, for thou haſt redeemed it.

Hemmings and Cripps were calling upon the Lord, and I truſt they are now in glory, praiſing redeeming love.

This I received from Steptoe, and I think I have been ſhort in ſetting it forth. His experience

rience was remarkably great; he was ſhy in ſpeaking but to thoſe he had been uſed to. He was not like the Phariſees, who ſound their own trumpet. And, I wiſh all that read this, may be ſuch as he was, except his bonds, impriſonment, and ſhameful death.

Now let us break off the ſubject, and commit his body to the earth and the ſoul to God who gave it; and ſay with Job, the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and bleſſed be his name. The mortal part, though ſown in diſhonour, ſhall be raiſed in glory: and, tho' ſown in weakneſs, it ſhall be raiſed in power. And bleſſed is he who ſhall have part in the firſt reſurrection, on whom the ſecond death hath no power. Let us, my friends, that are left behind, improve the golden ſeaſons that we enjoy, and beg God would bleſs them to our ſoul. And O that the thoughtleſs and rebellious ſinners were wiſe, that they underſtood this; that they would conſider, duſt thou art, and unto duſt ſhalt thou return. And

as

as the tree falls ſo it muſt lie; as death leaves them, judgment will aſſuredly find them. The wicked ſhall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God: But the righteous ſhall go into life everlaſting. To which place may God exalt us, for Chriſt's ſake. Amen.

An HYMN.

JESU! lover of my ſoul,
Let me to the boſom fly;
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempeſt ſtill is high:
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
'Till the ſtorm of life is paſt;
Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my ſoul at laſt.

Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpleſs ſoul on Thee;
Leave, ah leave me not alone,
Still ſupport and comfort me:
All my truſt on Thee is ſtay'd,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceleſs head,
With the ſhadow of thy wing.

Thou

Thou, O Chriſt, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find;
Raiſe the fallen, chear the faint,
Heal the ſick, and lead the blind:
Juſt and holy is thy name,
I am all unrighteouſneſs:
Vile, and full of ſin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.

Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to pardon all my ſin;
Let thy healing ſtreams abound,
Make and keep me pure within:
Thou of life the fountain art,
Freely let me taſte of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Riſe to all eternity.